



# *The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

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### **Salmon Fry Stocking Under Way in Connecticut River Tributaries** **Fish and Game Commissioner Griffin and local students stock young salmon in Chesterfield's Bronson Brook tomorrow**

BOSTON – Atlantic salmon are making a slow but steady comeback in the Connecticut River, thanks to a cooperative restoration program run by Massachusetts and other New England state wildlife agencies and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Through that effort, the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife) and a cadre of volunteers will stock 1.5 million state and federal hatchery-raised salmon fry (baby salmon) into Connecticut River tributaries during April and May.

**Tomorrow morning (Friday, April 18)**, Massachusetts Fish and Game Commissioner Mary Griffin, whose department includes MassWildlife, will join students from Williamsburg's Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School to release 25,000 one-half inch long salmon into Bronson Brook in West Chesterfield. **(See meeting time and directions below to the meeting location at Norwottuck Rail Trail in Northampton.)** The stocking spot is just upstream from MassWildlife's "catch and release" fishing area. Bronson Brook is the site of a pilot river continuity project by DFG's Riverways Program, which is working with multiple partners to restore access to spawning areas for Atlantic salmon, as well as brook trout and other coldwater species.

"Restoration of a species that has been absent from Massachusetts for 200 years is an extremely difficult endeavor, and we greatly appreciate all of the volunteers who are helping MassWildlife in the effort to bring back naturally reproducing Atlantic salmon in the Connecticut River watershed," said Commissioner Griffin. "There are many stocking events scheduled over the next few weeks, and those taking place during the school vacation week and on weekends offer particularly good opportunities to teach youth about wildlife and environmental stewardship, and offer a great way for families to get out and enjoy some of the most beautiful natural areas in the Commonwealth."

The Connecticut River's once-abundant native runs of Atlantic salmon were extirpated about 200 years ago due mainly to development of dams that blocked their migration from sea to river. Female salmon bury fertilized eggs in stream bottom gravel nests in late autumn and fry hatch in late winter and emerge from the gravel in early spring. After spending two years in freshwater, young salmon migrate to the ocean where they grow to maturity. After two to three years at sea, adult salmon weighing eight to 15 pounds return to their native streams to repeat the spawning cycle.

As a result of the 20-year Connecticut River salmon restoration program (a joint effort of wildlife agencies in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire and Vermont and the USFWS), several hundred adult Atlantic salmon once again return to the Connecticut River to spawn each year. Including the 1.5 million released in dozens of tributaries in Massachusetts, the restoration project will stock approximately six million salmon fry throughout the entire Connecticut River Basin this spring. The fry for Massachusetts stocking come from DFW's Roger Reed Hatchery in Palmer and the White River National Fish Hatchery in Bethel, Vermont.

In addition to stocking salmon fry, MassWildlife's anadromous (migratory) fish programs include monitoring fish passage at dams on the Connecticut, Westfield, and Merrimack Rivers; trapping salmon and shad for transport to hatcheries and/or upstream locations; working with federal agencies to ensure safe upstream and downstream fish passage at hydroelectric dams; and helping local watershed groups improve freshwater fish habitat.

The Division encourages volunteers to assist in salmon fry stocking this spring. For more information on dates, meeting times and locations, visit [www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/fisheries/anadromous/salmon\\_fry\\_stocking.htm](http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/fisheries/anadromous/salmon_fry_stocking.htm).

**Directions for Friday, 4/18, event with Commissioner Griffin:**

Group leaves at 8:30 a.m. sharp from to Norwottuck Rail Trail in Northampton.

**From the east or west:** Mass Pike (I-90) to exit 4, Route 91 north to Route 9, exit 19. Go through lights onto Damon Rd., and park at Elwell Recreation Area. **From the North:** Route 91 south to exit 20. At the bottom of the ramp, merge with traffic and enter left lane. Turn left at light onto Damon Road. Proceed one-half mile, and park on the left at the Elwell Recreation Area. **From the South:** Route 91 North to exit 19. At the end of ramp, go straight through light. Parking area is on the right.

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